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FIDELITY TO THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION,
THE DUTY AND INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE.

A
SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE
NEW NORTH CHURCH, EDINBURGH,

On Thursday, February 27. 1794,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY FOR
A GENERAL FAST.

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*Nam cunctas nationes et urbes Populus, aut Primores, aut Singuli regunt :
delecta ex his et constituta reipublicæ forma, laudari facilius quam
evenire potest. — TAC. ANN. l. iv. c. 33.*

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M.DCC.XCIV.



FIDELITY TO THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION,
THE DUTY AND INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE.

A

S E R M O N.

Isaiah xxvi. 15, 16.

THOU HAST INCREASED THE NATION, O LORD, THOU
HAST INCREASED THE NATION, THOU ART GLORI-
FIED; THOU HAST REMOVED (EXTENDED) IT FAR
UNTO ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

LORD, IN TROUBLE HAVE THEY VISITED THEE, THEY
POURED OUT A PRAYER WHEN THY CHASTENING
WAS UPON THEM.

THE prosperity of a nation depends es-
sentially on religion. The interests of
communities are under the direction and
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controul of the same Providence which regulates the lot of individual men. Public blessings, therefore, are to be sought and obtained from that heavenly Father, who knows how to give good gifts to his children. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him, whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only?*

The connection of religion with the public welfare, can be traced in many instances in the history of nations; and, lest mankind should overlook this principle, which they are so deeply concerned to respect, God has condescended to unfold this part of his plan, and to explain it, for the benefit of the human race. In the series of dispensations towards the Jewish nation, inspired prophets were sent in succession, to point out this connection through the whole detail of Providence.

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The people received regular warning of the evils which approached, as often as corruption became general among them; and they obtained the assurances of deliverance and favour when they repented, put away the evil of their doings, and returned to the service of God. Events confirmed the words of the inspired messengers; and the records of Divine revelation contain this history of Providence under a visible manifestation: *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

The judicial arm of the Lord, which is stretched out over the nations, is not in other cases thus visibly exhibited; but it is to be spiritually discerned. The principle of the Divine Providence is substantially the same in all cases: in so far as to shew his faithful mercies to the upright; to make public reformation the

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source

source of public safety ; to make righteousness exalt a nation ; and to send ruin and reproach on a sinful people,

The words of the text, which were spoken of the Jewish State, may, in their spirit, and according to the analogy of Providence, be happily applied to this nation, which God has increased ; and they shew the propriety of the duties to which our gracious and pious Sovereign requires our attention on this day ;—in the time of trouble to offer unto God the united devotions of a whole people, and to pour out a prayer when his chastening hand is upon us.

God has increased and extended the empire of Britain. It has long held the first rank among the nations of Europe : it has possessed a weight in the scale of human affairs, and a power in the great political system, which has been felt in every

every quarter of the globe. Britain has been, for some ages, and still is, the centre and spring of the commercial transactions of mankind ; it is the storehouse of the nations, to which they bring their merchandise, and the productions of every climate ; and from which they draw those manufactures, which are suited to the various demands of every people on all the shores of the Atlantic, the Indian, and Pacific oceans,

From what causes has our Island attained to all this eminence ? and how has the coy heart of Commerce been won to fix her abode in England ? Recollect her history, and you will know, she is wedded to Freedom, and with Freedom only will she dwell.

Proportioned to constitutional liberty, and the security of property, commerce has been successively established in Phenicia,

cia, in Egypt under the Greek princes, in Genoa, in Venice, in Holland. But in England, from the period of the Revolution, when the British Constitution was defined and secured, the singular political advantages of this country, has fixed the commercial system almost exclusively to centre in our Island. The excellence of our Constitution has done more; it has not only attracted commerce to our shores, but it has raised the commercial system, in the scene of human affairs, to a magnitude which is beyond all example in the experience of the world. The eighteenth century has beheld commerce, under that perfect liberty and security which characterises its central station, working with a grandeur, and an extent of enterprize, which has given a new spring to the arts and industry of the human race, and formed a bond of connection and intercourse, which embraces this whole globe.

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Here is a proof, from fact, of the excellence of the British Constitution; which should put to silence and to shame the little politicians and innovators of the day, who presume to touch the grand machine with the hand of ignorance, and think they can reform the work of their masters, by breaking the springs, and tearing the wheels from their places.

The great commercial system, though a splendid effect of British liberty, is neither the only nor the principal benefit which we derive from that constitution which the sons of mischief now threaten to assail, and in behalf of which we come this day to crave the protection of God.— Let us therefore consider,

- I. The Blessings which we enjoy as a People.
- II. The Reasons of Alarm at this season.
- III. The Grounds of Hope.
- IV. The Means of Safety.

i. The blessings which we enjoy as a people, under the British Constitution.

It is not my intention to enter upon any deep disquisition on the principles of government ; that subject has exercised the genius of the greatest philosophers who have adorned the human character ; and such men, after many years of study and reflection, have confessed themselves not more than equal to an engagement so extensive and so profound. The science of government demands an accurate knowledge of the human heart, a thorough acquaintance with general history, with the sources and consequences of revolutions, and of the measures adopted by Statesmen in various ages. It requires a penetrating discrimination of national characters, and an experienced sagacity in the application of means to ends : it requires the application of a mind which is at once comprehensive and correct ; which is alike

guarded

guarded against prejudice in favour of ancient errors, and against a headlong enthusiasm in favour of projected innovations.

These views of the qualities requisite for sound political speculation are not always respected as they ought. Men half informed, and men uninformed, take up the subject of the government of nations, as if it were the play of children, or the evening's amusement of a club; or as if it were summed up in the repetition of a few terms of art, such as *suffrage*, *representation*, *convention*, *section*, *bulletin*, and *order of the day*. All this might pass without notice, if the men meant no more than a harmless display of their science and elocution: but when, from the force of these terms, as premises, they infer the insufficiency of the British Constitution to the public happiness, and when, from the illumination of these premises, they teach

the people to be discontented with their condition, disloyal to their Sovereign, and ungrateful to their God, there is evil and wrong reared upon ignorance and folly. They set up for masters in a science, of which they know not the principles; and they fix on particular points in a great system as blemishes, because they cannot discern the relation of the parts to the whole: Like the fly in the fable, which had perched upon the cornice of the temple, and whose microscopic eye could take in only the space of a few inches of the carved work around the spot where he sat; remarking there the inequalities of the surface, pronounced the whole building to be irregular and useless; and exclaimed, that it ought to be pulled down, and a proper edifice reared in its place, by architects of his own tribe.

Men of reflection have delivered, as the result of their inquiries into the forms of govern-

government, some observations, which are sufficiently perspicuous, and which may be stated from this place, without attempting to fathom the depths of the science.

All the governments on earth may be reduced to three primitive forms, existing either singly, or combined: the government by one person, or by a few, or by the many. The first is termed Monarchy, the second Aristocracy, the third Democracy. Each of these forms has its advantages, and each has its peculiar evils. The advantages of a simple and absolute Monarchy, are, that it collects the public force to a point, and can at all times act with decision, with promptitude, and with vigour. Its disadvantages are, that the individual subject is nothing in the system; that his interest and comfort are apt to be overlooked; and that the Prince, unless he is wise and just above the usual standard of humanity, is tempted to commit,

or to connive at oppression, in various forms, in following out his favourite schemes.

An Aristocracy, or the government of the Few, who are of course the men of the highest rank, and of the best education in the State, possesses the advantage of wisdom in the administration of affairs, in attending to the true interest of the nation respecting transactions with other States, and in applying the most proper means for accomplishing the ends in view. The disadvantages of this form are, that the ends which the rulers have in view, may be wicked, and for this the Constitution provides no remedy : that the Nobles, who possess all power, are subject to the temptations of faction and cabal : that the people suffer by the vices and divisions of their masters, who are always ready to unite in the point of oppression, and in that only.

A Democracy, or the government of the Many, possesses, as its advantages, an universal and perpetual attention to civil liberty, and a jealous inspection of the public administration, which renders its officers cautious in the discharge of their trust. Its disadvantages are, that it is unsteady in its measures, subjected to all the fluctuations of opinion; that personal safety depends upon the popularity of the day; that the most violent and unprincipled demagogues often take the lead in the State; that justice is borne down by tumult; that the best and most enlightened citizens are exposed to the most imminent peril; and that it can only be tolerable either in a small State, or among a people so perfectly virtuous in their own principles, individually and universally, as exceeds by much the standard of any nation within the experience of history.

A profound historian and politician in ancient times, meditating upon these primitive forms of government, conceived the great idea, that from a combination of the three in one system, the most perfect of all possible governments might be formed; but thought himself obliged to check his imagination in this beautiful vision, from an impression, that the scheme was too perfect ever to be admitted into human affairs.

We are entitled to detach this subject from the difficulty which arrested the speculations of the ancient sage, and to mark, as an evident and obvious conclusion, that if there is a government on earth which does combine and retain all the good which is scattered through the three primitive forms, and avoid safely and completely the peculiar evils of each, that is the government under which a wise man would wish that himself and his family might live; to pass the time
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of their sojourning on earth in peace, and, under its influence, to give thanks without ceasing to God.

A government which possesses an essential Monarchy, in its vigour, its decision, and its unity of exertion; which at the same time possesses a real Aristocracy, exercising completely its wisdom and experience in the public service; and which enjoys also a constitutional Democracy, on the basis of election; is every thing that can be wished in political arrangements. The Three Estates form, of course, the balance of power; and that balance, operating on each branch respectively, preserves the public weal at all hands.

Such is the Constitution of Britain: in which is realized, that which Philosophy had beheld afar off, but had not dared to hope for; that union, in one system, of all the good which human governments
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can yield ; while it stands essentially guarded, by the particular and the general interests of all concerned, from the evils which unavoidably attach themselves to other forms.

During the long struggles which preceded this happy establishment, the balance shifted at different times, and gave predominance to the opposite extremes. The Princes of the House of Stuart laid claim to absolute and unlimited power, and were repulsed by the resistance of the people, when the last necessity rendered resistance just. Then the Democracy seized the whole power, till they were convinced of the fatal error, by their sufferings. Again the Stuarts were invested with every thing by the nation, when Republican violence had broke its heart. At length the true sources of freedom, law, and order, were fully discovered, in the system of Mixed Government ;

ment; and the charter of our inheritance was sealed at the Revolution.

Since that time, formidable attempts have been twice made to restore the ancient despotism, on the claim of indefeasible right. Our fathers were not deluded by the sound; they indignantly rejected the claim, and were true to the liberties of their country. In our day, we hear the cry of a faction, on the opposite extreme, who wish to force upon the heads of Britons the blood-stained cap of Republicanism, under the pretence of imprescriptible right to misery; which the French philosophers have just discovered in behalf of all mankind. But, leaving the *imprescriptible* right on the one side, and the *indefeasible* right on the other, in the regions of imposture and of contempt, we are satisfied to be happy under equal laws, and constitutional freedom. For above an hundred

hundred years this has been the inheritance of Britons ; and before we will meddle with those that are given to change, or permit our children to be robbed of what our fathers charged us to transmit safely into their hands, we will examine the worth of the subject, and consider what it regularly yields.

Under the British Constitution, the people of this land enjoy religious liberty.

At the period of the Revolution, the Church was established by law, in that form which the great body of the nation preferred. By this establishment, a competent number of teachers are provided, and maintained from funds legally set apart for that purpose. They are stationed separately over the whole extent of the kingdom, in such manner, that, in the remotest districts, the people have the means of public worship and instruction brought

brought home to their dwellings, without trouble or expence; while it is obvious, that, if no such establishment had been provided, many extensive regions in this kingdom must have been left in profound ignorance, which their poverty would have rendered irremediable.

This establishment is faithfully protected by the laws of the land: But it is not exclusively protected. The spirit of the Constitution, just, as well as liberal, respects the privilege of private judgment, and the rights of conscience, whether well or ill informed in individual men. The Laws of this country say to the members of the Establishment, ‘ We have provided teachers for you, and be ye contented. But, mark the terms: Ye shall not compel any of your fellow-subjects to join you: dissenters shall not be permitted to invade *your* privileges; but neither shall you interfere with *their* rights: they are as much

under the protection of law as you are : no man shall dare to molest them in their separate assemblies ; their altars are as inviolable as yours : It is here lawful to be a dissenter.'

This is religious liberty unequalled ; and our Establishment, far from being a domineering or intolerant confederacy, is only a wise provision, that, to the country at large, instruction shall be offered ; that to the poor, the Gospel shall be preached.

Further—Under the British Constitution, the people of this country enjoy personal safety. This great blessing, the foundation of comfort in civil life, is possessed alike by the highest and the lowest in this land, in a degree of perfection which cannot be exceeded by any possible arrangements of human wisdom. The whole laws to which we are amenable, are publicly known. The rulers dare
not

not oppress; the individuals dare not injure. We cannot suffer confinement but according to law: we cannot be punished, but upon conviction of crime, by the verdict of a Jury. This also is our inheritance.

Again—The subjects of this nation enjoy liberty of action, of speech, and of writing. Every man, here, is master of his own time, of his own means, of his own conduct. He may be busy, or he may be idle; he may employ his substance according to his discretion, or according to his indiscretion; he may conduct himself and his affairs wisely or foolishly; he is free to do every thing that is good, and every thing that is harmless to others: but, he must not go farther. The law will not permit him to hurt his neighbour; for this reason, that his neighbour is under its protection as well as he. To make liberty secure, it is
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necessary that there should be restraint. This is the end of law ; and the character of good law is, that it interposes its barriers against harm, and against that only ; securing freedom to innocence. The laws of Britain, in this respect, are adjusted to the standard of the laws of morality. Limitations and restrictions upon conduct, are essential to the peace of the world. The laws of God contain prohibitions and restrictions. The liberty wherewith Christ hath set us free, is not a liberty to sin, but a deliverance from the bondage of corruption, the freedom of a blameless heart, and a conversation void of offence.

The liberty of speech and writing, is enjoyed by the people of this country in a degree far beyond what has ever elsewhere been known: and, God forgive and reclaim them, if they abuse it so far, as to make the nation itself apprehend danger even from its freedom. The abuse, is
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treason against liberty, and exposes it to the jealousy of its best friends. The liberty of speech and writing is limited by bounds and restrictions, the same in substance as those which apply to other parts of conduct. Every thing that is good, and every thing that is harmless, may be spoken or written. But, if men shall at any time employ these powers to defame their neighbours, and to rob them of their good name; or to excite sedition and disaffection against the public weal, and expose to hazard or reproach that Constitution on which depend the comforts which every one of us enjoy in civil society, the law must there administer its firm rebuke; for, if it did not, it would abdicate its proper office, of particular and general protection. This is constitutional doctrine on the liberty of the press, which is clearly to be referred to the general article of liberty of conduct, and to be limited

imited by the moral barrier between innocence and harm.

Further still—The people of this country enjoy the security of property. This benefit is possessed, in the fullest perfection, under a mixed government; where the *limitations* of the Monarchy render it impossible for the Prince to seize with the hand of power what belongs to a subject; and where the *force* of the Monarchy guards the people from being plundered by one another. The entire security of property in this land, is the soul of commerce, gives industry its full operation, and forms that spring in the whole body of society, which makes the people happy, and the nation great.

One necessary consequence of the security of property, is, a distinction of ranks, founded on the possession of wealth in all different degrees. A man may be frugal;
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for his savings are his own. He may be active in business, he may lay his plans of enterprize, and pursue them without danger; for his gains are at his disposal, and may raise to consequence himself and his children. Why are some men rich? it is, that they have gained their possessions by industry; or, that their forefathers having been prosperous, have transmitted their gains to their descendants. Ought it not to be lawful for a poor man to become rich, if Providence shall put this in his power by honest means? All men cannot be rich; for wealth is a relative situation. All men cannot be equal, but in a state of universal poverty and misery. From the security of property, and the various degrees of affluence in this country, the best effects follow: There is employment and there is bread for all; there is a certain competence here tendered, in Providence, to every man who is willing to work in his calling: the path of for-

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tune is safe and open to the genius and exertion of youth; but there is no licence for the idle and worthless to plunder the families of honest men.

Let us see how the people among us, who have of this world's goods, employ the affluence which they or their fathers have acquired. It cannot be said that they use their advantage harshly. The subjects of the British government surpass all the world, and all that history can tell, in humanity, compassion, and charity. Public establishments for the poor, the sick, the orphans, the helpless of every description, abound among us, and are supported with a liberality which is unequalled: besides the much greater extent to which private bounty is carried, for the support and consolation of the sons and daughters of affliction.

Such, my brethren, is the state of things
among

been forced into the contest, against an enemy which appears in a new character, and which acts upon maxims unknown to former ages. A great nation, whose ancient government needed reformation, has destroyed, instead of limiting, its Monarchy; and instead of amending its Constitution, has dissolved civil society. The people have risen up in phrensy; they have relinquished justice, both in its forms and its substance; they have made property the subject of pillage; they have levelled all ranks in the dust; they have trodden humanity under foot; they have suppressed religion; they have disclaimed immortality, and have publicly renounced the Almighty. Had this been the whole of the case, we could have beheld their state only with wonder and regret; we should have mourned for the sufferings of broken families, and for the calamities of a people over whom the worst men in the nation had assumed the rule,

spreading

spreading around them on every side havoc, desolation and misery. We should have learned only to deprecate Republican government more earnestly than ever, and to read more clearly the definition of a great Democratical Republic, that it is the government of criminals and profligates over the rest of the community, for the purposes of plunder and destruction.

But the Republicans of France, not satisfied with having ruined their own country, have taken up the zeal of proselytism in the propagation of misery! They conquered Savoy, and forced their gifts upon a reluctant and peaceful people. They set at nought the law of nations, and the rights of other states to enjoy their own Constitutions in quiet. They passed a decree of Fraternity, as it was termed, offering aid to disaffected people in all countries against their rulers; they made apparent those views of universal hostility,

hostility, and of the subversion of all governments, which one of their leaders, before his death, avowed in these terms :
 “ That their object was to set fire to the
 “ four corners of Europe, and to raise
 “ every where the governed against their
 “ governors, by the force of *equality*.”
 In pursuance of this object, they poured their missionaries by hundreds into England, as well as into the neighbouring States, to form conspiracies with every desperate and discontented man ; to bring factious and simple people together in clubs, in every corner of the land ; to distribute money to the profligate ; to dupe the ignorant, and to harangue on the benefits of equality, levelling, and anarchy. When these preparations were deemed to be in sufficient forwardness, they openly undertook to second the work of the missionaries by arms. They invaded Holland with a powerful army ; and they declared war against the British nation, to compel
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an acquiescence in the doctrines of Democracy ; and to plant that Fatal Tree, whose leaves are steeped in blood, and which is the emblem only of the liberty of murderers, to stab, to burn, and to exterminate !

Thus has war been forced upon us. We have been compelled, by the last necessity, to draw the sword in self-defence. This war resembles no former contest, in its principles or objects. It is not for the acquisition or protection of foreign territory ; it is not for redress of particular wrongs, or the support of national honour : It is for national existence, that we arm. It is for Religion against Atheism ; for justice and security against universal depredation ; for humanity against barbarous cruelty ; for social order ; for legal freedom ; for all that distinguishes men in civil society, from a band of robbers, or an horde of savages. The British

tish sword is drawn in the cause of God, and of our country; and in defence of our lives, our families, and our all.

While the country is to be protected by its force, it is fit that the people should be on their guard against the delusive theories which are propagated by intestine foes, who wish for the day of evil, and are faithless to the land which has sheltered and fed them. Their insidious purposes increase the alarm of this season. The pupils, the confederates, or the successors of the French missionaries, are of different classes. They are understood to consist of bold adventurers, who are hired to mischief by foreign gold; of men ruined by their folly, who thirst for the spoils of their country; and of ignorant persons, who are wise in their own conceit, and confirmed in the delusion, by the flattering speeches of artful incendiaries. It is to be hoped that their numbers are few.

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To them it would be to no purpose to address from this place the words of exhortation. But the prophet Isaiah, in the 10th verse of this chapter, has described the conduct of certain persons, of whom some are to be found in every age; and I leave to their consciences to make the application. *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.*

III. We are to consider the Grounds of Hope.

In a good cause we may reasonably hope for the Divine protection. The nations are in the hand of Providence; and the great Father of us all is ever attentive to the interests of righteousness, and of the kingdom of Christ among men. No weapon that is formed against his kingdom

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shall

shall finally prosper. Our enemies have disclaimed that aid of Heaven, which we, with the united supplications of a whole people, this day invoke. They have said, as the Heathen persecutors reproached the suffering Christians, ‘ You see how powerful we are become under our own gods ; while your God does not deliver you from our wrath.’ The vaunt was but recent, when the empire fell to pieces, and Christianity was led to victory, and to peace.

Our cause is such, so connected with the interests of order, morality, and religion upon earth, that nothing but our own sins can make us apprehensive of the event. It is meet to be said unto God, We have sinned, we have borne chastisement, and will not offend any more. This is at the present moment our solemn national profession : let it be sincere ; let reformation follow contrition ; let us universally

versally return to God with full purpose of heart, to respect his ordinances, to fear his name, to keep his commandments, to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in a good conscience, to observe with principle and affection our civil, moral, and religious duties; and the answer of our prayers is already delivered from heaven, and recorded in the book of inspiration. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it: If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them*.*

Our hope in the Divine mercy and protection

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* Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

tection may be animated by the recollection of the many deliverances which this nation has in former times obtained from the hand of God. The whole sum of blessings which we enjoy as a people, our religious liberties and our civil freedom, were acquired by a series of dispensations in the loving-kindness of our heavenly Father. We were distinguished among the nations who received the light of the reformation at its first dawning in Europe, and we soon enjoyed it under the security of law: and Britain has been long honoured, by holding the situation of the bulwark of the reformed churches. Our civil liberties grew under the fostering hand of Providence, and have been regularly and remarkably preserved from the effects of every domestic conspiracy which has been formed, and of every foreign power which has arisen against them. May we not confide in His favour who is the God of our fathers, that His mercy will

will be with their children for deliverance ?

It is permitted to us, under God, to look also to the instruments which are to be employed for good to us and ours. Britain is at this moment in the full vigour of its strength. Our fleets, which the enemy has not dared to meet on the ocean, are manned with sailors, such as the country of commercial freedom only can produce. Our armies, numerous, disciplined, and well appointed, are animated by the generous intrepidity which the Constitution inspires ; and glow with zeal in the great Cause, to turn the battle from our gates. The Constitution itself, the vital spring of all, stands supported by the united fidelity of the Three Estates of the Legislature, and by the loyalty, by the lives and fortunes of a great people.

There is in the people of this nation a
fund

fund of good principles and of good sense, by which the public welfare is guarded in the most tempestuous seasons: they know their duty to their God, to their King, to their Country; to themselves, and to their children. They know their interest, in preferring the tried blessings of law and good order, to the perils and mischiefs of rash innovation: they know the value of the glorious fabric which has been reared for them: and they turn with indignation from the strange counsel of men who bid them set fire to the house of their paternal inheritance. The people of this country love their Constitution: it is their own, it is their home, it is their glory: and their loyalty is thus secured by the triple bond of their principles, their interests, and their affections.

IV. We are to consider the Means of Safety.

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It is not intended to discuss in this place the duties of office, the high obligations to vigilance, courage, and zeal, which the times peculiarly impress on rulers, legislators, judges, and magistrates. These situations are happily filled by enlightened and faithful men, who love their country, are active in its interest, and fully enjoy its confidence. But there are means of safety which rest with the people individually and collectively; and to these let our attention be earnestly turned. The first of these means, is, that with one heart and one voice, we should approach the throne of Grace, in earnest supplication, that the Lord of Hosts may be on our side. We have grounds to hope for his aid; but it must be prayed for, with fervour, and with perseverance. *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* The Almighty will protect the nation, and will be glorified as its Saviour;

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if in trouble they visit him, and pour out a prayer when his chastening is upon them.

The aid of God is to be sought, not merely by words, but, according to the terms of his moral administration, by returning fully and permanently to his service.—

Wherefore, let the contrition which we this day express, be, with all ranks of men, the germ of repentance unto life.

This is the legitimate Reform, which will work out the protection of our privileges, and our national felicity. Let

us search into the real defects in our hearts and lives, instead of the imaginary imperfections of Government. Let the

people become friends to themselves, by piety and virtue, instead of listening to those false friends, who would teach them

to be discontented with their blessings, and ungrateful to the providence of God.

If the men who think themselves qualified to reform systems of Government, would give Morality the precedence of

Politics,

Politics, and seriously set about their personal reformation in the first instance, perhaps they might find work sufficient to engage their attention. From this plan of reform, they would derive essential benefit; they would forego the inclination to injure their country, and might, in process of time, regain the esteem of honest men. But whatever others may do, for us, and our families, let us serve the Lord. Let his ordinances be diligently observed. In our churches, in our families, in our closets, let us wait upon him; and have our conversation in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God. True religion advances a nation, both by a direct operation in procuring the blessing of God, and by an instrumental operation in making men faithful to their social and civil obligations. Our return to God, therefore, implies, or leads our return to virtue. If luxury has prevailed, it ought now to be

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replaced

replaced by simplicity and temperance. If inordinate expence has been in fashion, men ought now to be frugal, that they may be able to be just, and to abound in good works. If folly has come forward with our prosperity, let us become wise in this our day. If impiety has appeared in our land, let it be renounced and done away for ever. Thus shall the sources of corruption be cut off;—the causes which induce national decay shall cease to affect our country;—and the grounds of the Divine judgements, in the sins of the people, will be removed.

In the present crisis of public affairs, it is necessary that there should be, throughout the community, a peculiar vigilance, and a peculiar exertion. Men, individually, ought to attend diligently to what passes around them; to discourage the promoters of sedition; to be jealous of the smooth language and insidious arts of the

the malecontents ; to give their countenance and support to the friends of public order ; to animate and confirm one another, in a determined and intrepid attachment to the Constitution. Let the enemies of our quiet see, that a great people are not to be intimidated by the threats, nor silenced by the clamours of disaffection : that they will look sedition in the face, and challenge its title, on this foil : that the nation, with one heart and soul, will guard its Constitution, and will say, with the dignity of free men, ‘ This was our fathers’ ; it is ours ; and it shall be our children’s, if it please God : for we will not surrender it to the force of men ; we will not suffer it to be betrayed ; we have hearts and hands to defend it.’

It is further necessary, that we should diligently train up the rising generation in the same sentiments ; for a spirit of malignity has passed over the land, and

sown the seeds of the poisonous tree. *An enemy hath done this.* We are warned, and may in our day escape from the danger; but the seeds may vegetate, and grow up in secret after many days, and realize those evils in another generation, which we are now so anxious to avoid. Let loyalty, and reverence for the Constitution, enter seriously into parental instruction. Let the youth be taught to fear God, to honour the King, to offer up prayers and intercessions for all in lawful authority; that our descendants, as well as we, may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. For their benefit and our own, we this day cheerfully obey the commands of our gracious Sovereign, to offer up our national supplications before God Almighty.—*Therefore also now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn*

turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people: sanctify the congregation: assemble the elders: gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and will pity his people.*

* Joel ii. 12, &c.

FINIS.

